

BOOK REVIEW

Flora of Berkshire County, Massachusetts by Pamela B. Weatherbee. 1996. 135 pp. 48 color photos. ISBN 0-9648211-0-9. \$20.00 (paper). Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, MA.

This highly readable and accessible modern flora provides a wealth of information on the history, geology, floristics, vegetation communities and vascular plant species of Berkshire County. The habitat diversity of this 940-square mile region, which extends from Connecticut to Vermont, includes calcareous, serpentine, and metamorphic substrates and has a 2900-ft. elevation range, contributing to the occurrence of the 37 distinct plant communities for which Ms. Weatherbee provides comprehensive and detailed descriptions.

The book contains considerable information on each of the 1,675 taxa recorded from the county: whether native or introduced, frequency and abundance, habitats, flowering and fruiting dates and distribution within the county. Genera and species are in alphabetical order and nomenclature generally follows Kartesz. Eight color plates illustrate rare and uncommon species. Ms. Weatherbee also provides statistics on floristic change; exotics account for 27 percent of the taxa, and 35 native taxa and 107 aliens have migrated into the county since the last comprehensive survey in 1922. The book also includes a list of species which are occasionally observed but are nonpersistent.

I highly recommend this volume as a model for modern floristic treatments in New England. It provides a comprehensive picture of the flora of this complex segment of the region, and an engaging and well-written introduction to the habitat characteristics that account for species distributions and the occurrence of plant communities in western Massachusetts.

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